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SUBJECT: LETTER FROM AFGHANISTAN MINISTER OF DEFENSE WARDAK

11. (SBU) On Sunday, August 30, 2008 the Afghan Minister of Defense, General Rahim Wardak, circulated a letter to the NATO Secretary General on the issue of civil casualties, improving coordination between international and Afghan security forces and the Government of Afghanistan's desire to re-examine documents governing the status of international forces. The Secretary General circulated this letter to Allies on September 1.

12. (SBU) The Secretary General noted that these issues would be among the items addressed by Minister Wardak during his briefing to the North Atlantic Council in ISAF format on September 4, 2008. The text of the Wardak letter follows:

13. (SBU) As you are aware, military operations which repeatedly result in civilian casualties place at risk the success of our joint mission and jeopardize the popular support which is an undeniable requirement for our victory.

Over the past several years, the Afghan side has tried repeatedly to negotiate ways and means of limiting the risk and reducing the consequences of these unfortunate incidents.

Unfortunately, civilian fatalities during operations, air-strikes in populated areas, the uncoordinated searching of private homes and the detention of innocents have all continued. This has had an adverse affect upon the support of the Afghan people for their government and for international forces. Afghans from across the country, particularly from the East and South, have frequently come to the president to strongly voice their grievances.

Once again the Foreign Minister and I have been directed by the President and the cabinet (Presidential Decree no. 26 dated 25 August) with the expressed support of both houses of the parliament to establish procedures to address these grievances and to ensure closer cooperation and better coordination between international forces and the security forces of the sovereign government of Afghanistan.

The cabinet has announced the Government of Afghanistan's desire to re-examine the documents governing the status of international forces. I hope that we can develop a comprehensive Status of Forces Agreement which better reflects our current situation and mutual interests. The existing agreements were negotiated before Afghanistan had an elected government, and when our security institutions were on the verge of their creation. Also we must review and

revise our procedures to affect operational coordination, especially for air-strikes in populous areas, house searches and detentions.

The involvement of the ANSF in all phases of operations, to include planning, execution, and post-operational assessment and exploitation is also essential. Finally, we must create a standing combined investigative body to pursue incidents, allegations of misconduct and to present a united face on the information which the investigations reveal.

We strongly believe that with good cooperation and with some adjustments, we can continue the pursuit of our mutual objectives. Failure to address these serious concerns damages our prospects for success.

I therefore ask for your prompt consideration of this request.

Signed

Abdul Rahim Wardak  
Minister of National Defense

End Cable Text.  
VOLKER